

MAKING CULTURE COUNT: NEW DATA ON AUDIENCE BEHAVIOR

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Findings from the second year of a joint research project by The New Yorker magazine and LaPlaca Cohen Advertising reflect attitudinal shifts among the general population.

Respondents report attending arts events less. Slight increase in theater and museum attendance, however, offset by drops in opera and ballet. Two-thirds cite cost as the reason (barrier), reflecting the downturn in the economy.

46.4% attend one or more events a month (these are the frequent attenders)

What influences the decision to participate?

1. Social aspects is up big this year. Attending with family was the reason given by 88%; last year that figure was 53%. A huge increase, one that arts organizations must take note of.
2. Buzz, the must-see factor (blockbuster museum shows; Best of Broadway tours)
3. A trusted venue, especially for the visual arts.
4. Critics' recommendations. 44% of older patrons cited this influence; younger patrons rely more on each other.

What role does culture play in their life?

1. Entertainment
2. Family outing
3. Looking for quality
4. Escape
5. Educational (learn something new)

What do they seek in the performing arts?

1. Entertainment
2. Educational
3. Broaden the mind
4. Introduce children to the experience
5. Relaxation

The visual arts were the same except for the introduce children aspect

Where did all the subscribers go?

The performing arts have seen a decline of 23% in subscriptions. There's been a tidal shift toward flexibility and low dollar commitment. This decline in subscriptions is less apparent in the visual arts. The shift toward flexibility is even more visible among young audiences.

Where are they going for information?

1. Newspaper articles were a primary source, especially for mature patrons 55+ who also look at magazines and direct mail appeals
2. The young are not looking at weekend calendars in the newspapers, but are going on-line for information or looking at a Friday section for a Saturday event.
3. Patrons 30-54 rely on radio, TV, the Internet and Web content
4. Young patrons 18-29 observe ads outside the home (flyers, posters), weekly newspapers and the Internet, both ads and content
5. All age groups respond to word of mouth from family and friends

Spending: Frequent attenders spend a lot more money on site; know what motivates them

Incentives: Give patrons incentives to bring family and friends. And don't set up too many rules that will ruin family fun.

Bad news: Participation is down among the persuadables (the inclined). Again, they are price sensitive.

Implications: you must stress the entertainment value, the social experience and the value as a family experience. And use different communication strategies for different age groups.

For the full survey data go to www.newyorkercompass.com or www.laplacacohen.com